is also possible that all the monitor devices MD2 to MDn are provided with microphones and cameras.

Image data captured by the camera and audio data captured by the microphone in the monitor device MD are transmitted to the other teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn through the signal processing device SPD1 and the communication network NT.

Images based on image data sent from the teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn are displayed on the display sections of the monitor devices MD2 to MDn, and sound based on audio data sent from the teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn is output from the speakers of the monitor devices.

In other words, the monitor devices MD2 to MDn correspond to the teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn with one-to-one correspondence. For example, images based on image data (image data of the conference participant HM2 and the surrounding thereof) captured by the camera of the teleconference device TCD2 and sent through the communication network NT are displayed on the screen G of the display section of the monitor device MD2, and sound based on audio data (audio data of what the conference participant HM2 says) captured by the microphone of the teleconference device TCD2 and sent through the communication network NT is output from the speaker of the monitor device MD2.

In the same way, images based on image data captured by the camera of the teleconference device TCD3 and transmitted are displayed on the screen of the display section of the monitor device MD3, and sound based on audio data captured by the microphone of the teleconference device TCD3 and transmitted is output from the speaker of the monitor device. The other monitor devices MD work in the same way. Images sent from teleconference devices TCD are displayed and sound is output.

As described above, however, the relationships between the monitor devices MD2 to MDn and the teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn are not fixed but is dynamically changed as a so-called seating-order change. Therefore, the above-described one-to-one correspondence relationship is a tentative correspondence relationship such as that used in a system initial condition.

It can be considered that image data transmitted and received through the communication network NT among the teleconference devices TCD1 to TCDn includes still-picture data as well as motion-picture data.

The monitor devices MD2 to MDn are disposed as shown in Fig. 2 as if the conference participant HM1, who is in a conference room having the teleconference device TCD1, and the other conference participants HM2 to HMn (those displayed on the display sections of the monitor devices MD2

to MDn) were around one table to have a conference. Assuming that six teleconference devices TCD are used in the teleconference system and each teleconference device TCD is provided with five monitor devices, the five monitor devices can be disposed as shown in the figure such that a conference participant HM and the five monitor devices MD form, for example, a regular hexagon.

The attention-degree-information generating section JB of the signal processing device SPD in each teleconference device TCD generates attention-degree information used when a seating order is dynamically changed during a conference, as described below.

The attention-degree-information generating section JB1 of the signal processing device SPD1 in the teleconference device TCD1 is taken as an example among the attention-degree-information generating sections JB1 to JBn corresponding to the teleconference devices TCD1 to TCDn, and its operation will be described below.

The attention-degree-information generating section JB1 detects the degrees of attention which the conference participant HM1 pays to the other conference participants according to image data sent from the camera, for example, of the monitor device MDm disposed in the front of the conference participant HM1, and generates attention-degree information used for dynamically changing the seating order,